

BOOK REVIEWS

nist scholarship that has sought to critique models of autonomous subjectivity (Mackenzie and Stoljar 11). These models have been challenged for their entanglements with “a larger North American cultural ideal of competitive individualism” (Sherwin 34). That is, the rugged individual is borne out of, not logically prior to, cultural paradigms that cannot capture the inter-corporeal and inter-relational aspects to human living. Phillips is contributing to discourses that seek to move feminisms forward, that seek to build nuance into our demands for bodily control. For, even when calling for reform, feminist scholars and activists may be mired in the paradigms of self-ownership that force us into argumentative circles when confronted with scenarios where women might choose to rent themselves out. This book pulls us out of these argumentative ruts by noting how our language has been leading us astray.

References

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The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream

Mary Romero.
New York: New York University Press, 2011.

REVIEWED BY JUSTINE DYMOND

In *The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream*, Mary Romero, Professor of Justice Studies at Arizona University, provides an extensive study of the life of Olivia, the Chicana daughter of a Mexican woman who works as a live-in domestic in an elite, gated community in Los Angeles. Based on two decades of interviews with Olivia, Romero's analysis of Oliv-

ia's experiences in two distinct social worlds—the working-class, immigrant community of maids and the wealthy country-club milieu of her mother's employers—exposes the fictions of race and class superiority that perpetuate systems of inequality in the U.S.

The Maid's Daughter follows Olivia from early childhood well into her adulthood as a public relations consultant and the mother of two children. Romero provides long passages of Olivia's voice directly telling her story, followed by Romero's summaries and interpretive analysis. Early on, we learn of the confusing and contradictory position of "the maid's daughter," who is told she is "one of the family" while she also witnesses the exploitative labor conditions of her mother's work in the household. In Olivia's recounting of her experiences, and her ongoing reflection and interpretation of those experiences, Romero reveals "the themes that frame Olivia's search for identity and belonging, as well as their significance in highlighting the contradictions in mainstream notions of social mobility and meritocracy" (19). For example, as a child, Olivia watched her mother, Carmen, and her employer, Mrs. Smith, chat and gossip while cooking a meal. When Mrs. Smith asked about the food they ate in Mexico and Olivia started to answer, her mother cut her off abruptly. As Romero explains, "Carmen actively managed the separation between social worlds by prohibiting Olivia from talking about their summer trips to Mexico and suppressing information about their 'Mexicanness'" (61). As a teenager and adult, Olivia will frequently resist the message that upward mobility means erasing her Mexican heritage.

Though Romero foregrounds Olivia's experiences as a daughter, she also gives us a portrait of Carmen's mothering, as a parent to Olivia and as a caregiver and maid for the employers' children. The different ground rules across Carmen's two "mothering" roles are sometimes confusing to her daughter. The mothering roles are further confused by Mr. and Mrs. Smith, who lay claim to Olivia as one of their own children without acknowledging that their "favors"—funding Olivia's private school education, for example—are in fact earned by Carmen who is paid a low wage without benefits. Through Olivia's perspective, we also see the economic inequalities that enable the kind of intensive mothering assumed to be "good" mothering:

Olivia observed the additional time and energy women employers had to nurture their children—time and energy gained by transferring the less appealing aspects of child care to the maids. She saw how maids consoled the employers' children and provided emotional support. She also experienced the lack of time and energy that Carmen had to mother, because she had to work weekends, holidays, and evenings. (94)

Denied the emotional relationship she desires from her mother, Olivia also faces the “emotional labor” demanded by the Smiths. In college, and for once living independently from the Smith household, Olivia nonetheless feels pressured by the Smiths to perform her gratitude for their seeming largesse. But, as Romero points out, “The limits of the Smiths’ ‘generosity’ and real acceptance of Olivia as ‘one of the family’ were starkly drawn when it came to Olivia’s needs for the same benefits as their own children—college tuition, down payment on a house, or other privileges granted to upper-class children” (159). In later chapters, we see Olivia grappling with her painful memories of class inequality while also acknowledging the cultural capital she gained growing up in an upper-class household. These seemingly contradictory identities create friction between her and other Chicano/a students in college. However, as an adult professional working for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and later as a consultant for non-profit organizations and corporations, Olivia’s abilities to negotiate multiple cultural and linguistic spaces enable her success.

The Maid’s Daughter makes a valuable contribution to the studies of motherhood, gender, class, and immigrant experience. Romero’s compassionate and astute study brings a much-needed analysis of the class-based differences in mothering practices and ideologies of motherhood.

Borrowed Body

Valerie Mason-John.

Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2013.

REVIEWED BY ABIGAIL L. PALKO

Valerie Mason-John’s *Borrowed Body* immediately plunges its readers into Pauline’s world at the moment she spies her chance at reincarnation. An impatience that she only recognizes but cannot understand, however, has impelled her spirit to misread the violent coupling as that of lovers, and as she ruefully explains, “my impatience got me into trouble, and I’ve been paying for it ever since.” Pauline narrates her life story from this disastrous moment of conception until her release two months before her seventeenth birthday from prison; home for her is always a precarious situation as she trades life in fosterage in one of Dr Barnardo’s Villages for abuse at the hands of her birth mother, Wunmi, and then unsuccessfully tries to reintegrate into the Village.